

4-29-1869

## Letter from Sarah Whitney, to Anne Whitney, Rome, Italy, 1869 April 29

Sarah Whitney

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### Recommended Citation

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*Papers of Anne Whitney (MSS.4): Correspondence*. 217.  
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Apr. 29 '69

My beloved Anne, When Edward so unexpectedly broke in upon my writing day before yesterday causing me to leave Mrs Howe in the lurch, I was strongly desirous to talk on all day long, there was so much I wanted to say - But I did not, & what a loss was mine! Now I doubt if it is worth while to finish the Howe story for the rest - I fancy it has gone to the shades.

Burleigh, a correspondent of the "Journal" is sending letters from Europe & in last Congi paper, was one from Rome wh. I hoped to keep from Mother by making the fatigue consequent upon house cleaning a plea for non reading - but Father has just given it all to her & her hair stands on end with horror at the vile city - Your own last letter detailing governmental crimes was not very inspiring - & a north east storm adds depth to the blueness. Burleigh says & others say that there is a great deal of sickness among the Americans in Rome - & there are lots of confirming tongues to all the home fears. Heaven grant you our beloved, health & safety - & us, faith! A few snow flakes have fallen on this 29th day of Apr. & if a few more should descend, poor farmers might find their land enriched & poor lungs relieved. I think from your account of weather in Rome we have some cause to crow over our Superior climate though I do groan over this day. Tomorrow's sunshine will bring us all right & till then I will bid you adieu & go & see neighbor Barnard.



Sat. P. M. May 6. - A busy week in doors is winding  
up with a lot of errands outside. Having  
been to Boston this A. M., & taken an account  
of funds this P. M. I feel that while waiting  
for the vehicle that is to take me to Watertown  
I have a right to take up my pen & tell  
you of the joy that came last night in a  
letter from Rome mailed the 19<sup>th</sup> ult. - a more  
expeditions mail than the one wh carried  
mine of the 29<sup>th</sup> Mich. Romeward. I trust that  
was not far behind time with its favorable  
stems to reassure yr heart. Still the word  
is very good though neither father nor mother  
is in the robust health of the winter,  
the latter being somewhat dyspeptic & father  
lame through the swelling of his feet & ankles.  
As these are but the return of old symptoms,  
I trust they will soon pass away as heretofore.  
The inspiring hope that in another twelve  
months you will be planning to come home  
will give life a new relish to us all - & we  
must have health according to our hopes.  
Now, I almost wish the new carpets old  
have been saved off one year longer that  
you might have had the benefit of their  
freshness - but I shall be careful with the  
new window shades to prevent too much  
fading of the very modest, respectable looking  
red & white English Kidderminster. The

nice portfolio stand & the framed  
new pictures help out the furnishing  
so that I haven't very much reason  
to mourn for the pretty flower &  
flowery stand. That has given us  
a good deal of pleasure through the  
winter & spring. The Cytherean  
Fidyl & Lacharias have just come  
home substantially & prettily framed  
according to Mr Doll's advice. They  
look rather formidable for our  
nail & plaster supports & I must  
wait the assistance of more  
mechanical skill than we possess  
for their safe hanging. The Cupid,  
the Aqueduct, Minib & Raphael's  
Sibyls. I took to Mr D. to day.  
I think all that I shall hang  
for the present. I have questioned  
in my own mind whether if C. & C.  
wld like to borrow the other 2 frescoes  
I had better lend them for the  
pleasure they wld give me as well  
as them in their rather bare rooms.  
My doubts as to yr approval, & to their  
appreciation of the plan keep me inde-



Pat & Co. N. Y. A bad week in doors is winding  
circled. They wld add to my eyes in the  
adornment of their large parlor a good  
deal more than the cost of framing, (some  
30 or 40 dollars). Respecting the compar-  
ative cost of the photographs, as pur-  
chased of the Dealers here, or procured  
as these have been, I cannot say, being  
ignorant as yet of how much these have  
cost. Carrie says, Louise has been buying  
with the help of a friend in the trade,  
for her school-room, some very nice  
photogs as large as our largest for a  
dollar apiece. I shd like to see them  
before I assert it as a fact. I suppose  
it can only be through happy chances  
abroad & either direct smuggling or  
the permitted passage of them through  
the Custom House as personal apparel  
that much saving of money is likely  
to be effected. As mementos of travel,  
& evidence of taste in the selection  
from a greater variety than can be  
found in the stores here, I think they  
have a great additional value. So  
I shd like to have you use your own  
discretion in the matter of spending  
an hundred dollars more from my



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Treasury during the coming year. I  
shd like beside, one of those nice ~~black~~  
silk if they come in yr way, & a good  
serviceable brooch if you see any thing  
not over costly that I shd like. The  
Daisy is exceedingly pretty & I shall  
enjoy wearing it with a suitable  
dress. My winter garb wh. I still  
sport doesn't fit it. I wish I cld  
send out Edward & Carrie next fall  
to have a good time & help you  
on the homeward track - but for  
father's & mother's sake I cannot  
propose it. The Hints, I doubt not wd  
like their company, having had such a pleas-  
ant journey together through so many of the  
United States. I suppose you will see  
without the help of Advertiser or Nation  
that the Pacific railroad is finished.  
There's a journey that might relieve Europe  
of its superfluity of American travelers - but  
it is not likely to do so this year - for  
every body has engaged passage in the  
Steamer. The "China" came over in less than  
8 days lately - that being somewhat better  
than 17, God will remember it when Europe  
is done with. F. H. told her friends when



she bade them good bye on this side, that she  
shd. come again this season - so it was no secret  
you divulged. The other H. H. of whose existence  
I was unaware till Mary's last letter came, is  
described by Mr. Wier as a very pleasing, bright  
woman to whom he was introduced last May by  
Col. Higginson. Mary says she is an admirer  
of Mr. W.'s "little poem in the Radical", wh. Mrs.  
W. supposes is the "Two Lines to" wh. finds admirers  
here also though you & I don't understand it.  
I am sorry she finds Roman air unfavorable to  
her health - & more sorry that Addy is added  
to the list of Americans dying in the Eternal City.  
I anxiously wait farther tidings. I called at  
Dr. Bartolo this morn'g not liking to run the  
risk of spending time & strength in a possibly  
vain attempt to find Lizzy at the Studio. But  
she was there with Lizzy Green. As I was rushing  
for the 12 o'clk train I had to leave the photo  
with her mother who looked very bright &  
cordial & said the Dr. was better but not well.  
She also said that he met Mr. Manning in the  
St. Westerday - I wish we might meet him  
in Belmont.

Sun. A.M. "Bursleigh" gives me the following for  
art digestion of the Picture Chapel. It is a small  
poorly & cheaply furnished room capable of holding about  
200. It looks worn & soiled. If it was a Protestant  
Chapel it wd. be considered a positive disgrace to any  
congregation to allow it to remain in its present dilapidated  
condition. Its frescos are dark, faded & unsightly, & was

not Michael Angelo's name identified with them &  
they wd. be hardly tolerated in any public building  
in Europe " &c. &c. Shall I consider my engravings of  
no account or wait for some other voice that  
speaks with equal authority? But I can imagine  
that some of the art that was beautiful once  
may look dingy now, & to the untrained eye be  
devoid of interest. Mary S. says that she knows  
enough of art to know that she knows nothing - so  
she is not likely to declare with the happy owners  
of copies of celebrated paintings that their possessions  
"are far superior to the originals". Perhaps I shall thank  
my engravings are. I know that I like them now.

The newspapers say that in a trial of Caroline B.  
against C. W. Shannon the verdict was in favor of the deft.  
I know nothing more - but hope against hope that the  
day of our friends' peace draws on.

The Mack family have had a terrible grief this last  
week - first in the receipt from Athens of a telegram 3 weeks  
old announcing the death of Mrs. Mallman - & then a  
letter stating that it was by suicide. Last night's paper  
says her nervous system had been acted upon  
fast endurance by witnessing the cruelties practiced  
upon the Greeks by the Turks - that she was greatly  
beloved by the Greeks & publicly mourned. She  
leaves 3 little children whom her father has  
sent for. Another Cousin I believe has been  
appointed to take Mr. L.'s place.

Mon. P.M. Church going & company & visiting.  
Remained all the hours of yesterday. Starting  
for W. R. we saw Mr. Lambert in Water town  
& he told us that Katie had again been



seriously threatened with rheumatic fever  
but was decidedly better, though not well  
enough to admit visitors. \* He drove on  
however to call upon Lottie Davison who  
is making a fortnight's visit at her mother's  
preparatory to sailing on the 29<sup>th</sup>. He sent her  
love & thanks & wd have been glad to accept  
yr invitation to the 7 hills. He goes only to  
spend a few weeks with her boys in Switzerland,  
I don't know if yr proposed route involves  
the possibility of meeting her. I had all along  
hoped that in her going I was to have a  
chance to send some of the books you have  
wanted - but the hope is dashed.

When one of the Robbins family manifests  
any particular liberality or other virtue, the  
others express their fear that the virtuous  
one is going to die. If it were not a profane  
joking with serious things, I sh<sup>d</sup> be inclined  
to look upon yr toleration of C. C. as equally ominous.  
His estimation of yr family may be very  
flattering - & so might it be of the rest of  
the world if he wd but put 3000 miles  
between it & himself. Well! I do pity him  
& his wife too & all the rest of the people  
that have uncomfortable corners that  
will stick out into other people's way.  
Lottie was disappointed that Rah. had seen  
you & that her boys had not. I think  
she will miscome without any help from me  
that the tutor was not wisely chosen.

Yes! you sent the handsome old man



though I did not know his title - neither did I know that in these days, Artists attempt to represent the Almighty. The card & the larger group, (wh. I supposed might represent two families) are both very beautiful.

Don't my dear sister let yr imagination run wild over possible danger in this domicile. We do use Petroleum because Gas hasn't yet come into the house. As prepared by Downer we have less fear of the Kerosene's explosive quality than we might have of the gas that travels under ground - I wd risk that however - For carrying about the house we have a little metal lamp that we like very much, wh. it is said cannot be perilous in any way. The lamp is lined with something that looks like cotton, & a preparation of Petroleum is poured into it till the lining is saturated when the superfluous fluid is drained off & the lamp is ready for a whole night's use. This & our study lamp & Zetzi's small glass lamp furnish all the light we ordinarily need for the whole family, & make us less liable to the accidents of wh. you read than we were in the days of yore when a greater number of glass ones were used. Yesterday we had a fine sermon upon 'Trust' - its least parts of it were fine to my apprehension - Parts



were abstruse & I was too sleepy to comprehend  
the whole. The concluding idea I can give, & perhaps  
yr memory can help me to the poetic phrase  
wh. I thought might have been borrowed  
from Browning or elsewhere - The cocoa-  
nut palm & the sugar cane may be watered  
by either fresh or salt water - but in the  
milk or the sugar there will be found  
no tear. It seemed as if the preacher  
were sucking & sustaining his own heart as  
well as to comfort the afflicted ones in  
his congregation. I am so sorry that  
the Unitarians of this vicinity can't agree  
to be more tolerant of Mr W's peculiarities  
& agree to keep him in the W. pulpit! It  
seems to me I have not delivered the message  
Mrs Weiss sent when I last saw her. She was  
then confined to her room with lame & swollen  
feet from wh. She has not yet recovered. One  
of her first questions was of the news from  
my sister, with - "I wish I cld see her  
do give her a great deal of my love".

Mother says I may give you a good account of the health  
& strength there & I think she is right - with it goes even  
so much love. She wonders if beggars in Rome are not  
too common to make their presentation valuable. I have  
bought a stereoscope & I think a delightful picture  
for it might be made in yr studio - Wd you not  
like to show us yrself & work together? And ifaddy  
shd be calling upon you at the time the picture is made  
it wd be all the more valuable. Dearest love to her with  
our wishes that the next report from her may be more  
favorable. You will be careful I hope to begin no new  
work that shall keep you in Rome one day too long. Adieu



25-  
Rendellay



Miss Anne  
Care Messrs. Freeborn & Co

Rome  
Italy





